



**Iowa WIC Program**  
**Special Purpose Vendor Application**  
**Guidance**

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Iowa Department of Public Health  
Bureau of Nutrition & Health Promotion  
321 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0075  
515.281.6650

October 1, 2015 – September 30, 2018



*Promoting and Protecting the Health of Iowans*

# Iowa WIC Program

## Overview

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### Purpose

The purpose of this application guidance is to provide information to potential retailers with an interest in being an authorized WIC vendor. To be authorized to accept WIC checks, a retailer must have executed an agreement with the Iowa WIC Program. A retailer may begin to accept WIC food instruments only after an agreement has been signed and all store associates who will be handling WIC food instruments have been trained. Agreements must be renewed every three years.

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# Overview of the Iowa WIC Program

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<b>What is WIC?</b>	WIC (the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) is a nutrition program for women, infants and children. WIC was established by the U.S. Congress in 1973 in recognition of the need for adequate nutrition during pregnancy and early childhood, especially among limited income families. The Iowa WIC Program provides nutrition education, breastfeeding support, supplemental foods, and referrals for health services to approximately 70,000 individuals per month.
<b>Who is eligible for WIC?</b>	WIC services are available to women who are pregnant or who recently had a baby, as well as for infants and children up to the age of 5. Participants must meet income eligibility criteria (less than 185 percent of the federal poverty guidelines), must be a resident of Iowa, and be determined by a licensed dietitian to have a nutrition need.
<b>How is WIC funded?</b>	The Iowa WIC Program is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture through the Iowa Department of Public Health, Bureau of Nutrition & Health Promotion.
<b>What is my role as a special purpose vendor?</b>	Special purpose vendors may be retailers of any type of merchandise, but may accept WIC food instruments only for the infant and special formulas listed on the front of each WIC food instrument. Special purpose vendors are required to provide the specified formula within 48 hours or within 72 hours if a weekend or holiday is involved. Special formula inventory must be maintained for as long as there is a participant in the area that requires the special formula. Prices charged to WIC participants must be equal to or less than the prices charged to all other customers.
<b>Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT)</b>	Iowa is planning to move from the paper food instrument to an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. This transition is <b>expected to occur with pilot at the end of October 2015 and statewide rollout starting in early 2016.</b> The State WIC office will remain in close contact with vendors as this process moves forward. It will be important for the WIC Program to have the ability to communicate with vendors via e-mail/electronic communication.

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# Selection Criteria for WIC Vendors

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## General business requirements

A WIC vendor must:

- Maintain regular business hours. Open hours must include a minimum of two four-hour blocks of time the same five days each week. Daily operating hours must be consistent from week to week, and the “hours open” must be posted.
- Have no Food Assistance (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP) disqualification or civil monetary penalty imposed within the 12 months prior to the date of the application.
- Have no WIC Program disqualification imposed or a WIC application denied within the six-month period before the date of the application.
- Have no conviction or civil judgement entered against the business or owner(s) during the last six years for any activity that indicates a lack of business integrity.
- Not realize nor expect to realize more than 50 percent of it’s annual total revenue from the sale of infant and special medical formulas that are obtained with WIC food instruments.
- Consistently identify WIC product using shelf labels that meet the following criteria and meet price points:
  - Product Description indicating brand/company name, and product description,
  - Selling unit size (indicating ounces, pounds, container and sleeve/pack
  - Selling unit retail
  - Signage dimensions – block lettering. Tags will measure no less than 2 inches by 1 inch, and
  - Price Point font no less than 48 font.

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## WIC participant access

A WIC vendor must have:

- A minimum of one vendor contract will be maintained in rural counties where a WIC clinic is located if at all possible.

**Note:** The Iowa WIC Program does not limit the number of vendors who may participate in the agency service area.

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## Adherence to WIC regulations

Retailers who apply for a WIC contract indicate their intent to comply with **ALL** WIC regulations as outlined in this application packet and in the Iowa Administrative Code (IAC) Chapter 73. This includes the understanding that prices charged to WIC participants must be equal to or less than those charged to all other customers.

## Selection Criteria for WIC Vendors, Continued

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### Authorization criteria

The vendor may be primarily a retailer of any type of merchandise, but will be authorized to accept only WIC food instruments for infant and special medical formulas. WIC Special Purpose Vendors must meet each of the following criteria:

- No more than 50 percent of the retailer's gross retail sales may be realized from the sale of authorized WIC infant formula or special medical formula.
- WIC-authorized vendors are required to only purchase formula from a list maintained by the state WIC program, which includes State-licensed wholesalers, distributors, retailers, and infant formula manufacturers registered with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

**Note: Special Purpose Vendors are not authorized to redeem anything other than formula checks.**

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### Inventory

There are no minimum inventory requirements for special purpose vendors; however, the vendor must be able to obtain special formulas within 48 hours; within 72 hours if a weekend or holiday is involved.

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# Application Process

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**Directions** The information in this written application must be completed fully and accurately. The application must be received within 60 days of the initial request for an application. Failure to do so will result in the application being denied. Completed applications should be mailed or faxed to the Iowa Department of Public Health, Bureau of Nutrition & Health Promotion and WIC, 321 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0075, fax (515) 281-4913.

**Note: When an application is faxed, the original application still must be mailed to the Department.**

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**Application review** New vendor applications will be accepted at anytime during the year. The Department will review each application within five working days of receipt and determine if the retail outlet meets the selection criteria listed in the Iowa Administrative Code, Chapter 73. The Department may, at its discretion; request a retailer to resubmit an application prior to completing the review if the application is incomplete and determination of eligibility cannot be made.

If the application shows that the retailer does not meet one or more of the selection criteria, the Department will deny the application. If the retailer's application indicates that the retailer would qualify, the Department will make an on-site visit to verify the information in the application is accurate.

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**On-site visit** Department staff will contact the retailer to make an appointment for an on-site review. During this visit staff will verify the information contained in the application, explain Iowa WIC Program regulations that vendors must follow, and provide training. The manager and person responsible for store associate training must allow time at this appointment for training to be completed, taking approximately 60 minutes.

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**WIC Vendor Agreement** On submission of a completed application and a successful on-site visit, the Department and the retailer sign the WIC Vendor Agreement. Once the agreement is signed, an authorized vendor stamp will be provided with a WIC identification number.

**Note: Retailers are not authorized to accept WIC checks until a WIC Vendor Agreement is executed.**

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## Application Process, Continued

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### Denied applications

If the Department determines during the application review or the on-site visit that the retailer does not qualify, the Vendor Agreement shall not be signed. Within five working days of denying an agreement, the Department will advise the retailer in writing of the reasons for denial and the procedure for appeal.

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### Non-discrimination statement

The U.S. Department of Agriculture prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339; or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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### Re-application

If a WIC Vendor Agreement is denied, the retailer must wait 6 months before submitting a new application.

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## Application Process, Continued

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**Length of WIC Vendor Agreement**

Vendors must complete a new application and sign a new WIC Vendor Agreement every three years to continue accepting WIC food instruments. The WIC Vendor Agreement will expire:

- When the date specified in the WIC Vendor Agreement arrives;
- When ownership of the business named in the WIC Vendor Agreement changes;
- When the vendor ceases operation, or
- When the WIC Vendor Agreement is terminated for program violations.

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**Multiple retail locations**

Retailers must submit separate applications when applying for more than one business or location. A store representative who has legal authority to obligate the retailer must sign the WIC Vendor Agreement.

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**Contact information**

The Iowa WIC Program vendor staff may be contacted at:

Iowa Department of Public Health  
Bureau of Nutrition & Health Promotion  
321 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Phone: 515.281.6650      Fax: 515.281.4913

Website: <http://www.idph.state.ia.us/wic/default.aspx>

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# Reauthorization

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## Expiration of the agreement

The WIC Vendor Agreement expires when any of the following conditions occurs.

- When the agreement period ends;
- When ownership of the business named in the agreement changes;
- When the business in the agreement ceases operation, or
- When program violations warrant a disqualification from the program.

All Vendors must complete a new application to qualify for a new WIC Vendor Agreement at the end of the contract period. A vendor may not continue accepting WIC food instruments after the expiration date of the WIC Vendor Agreement.

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## Denial of new agreement

The Department will not offer a new agreement if **ANY** of the following conditions apply:

- The selection criteria are no longer met.
- The vendor has been assessed more than 60 violation points under Iowa Administrative Code, paragraph 73.19(2)“b” within the previous 24 months.
- The vendor has failed to submit any of the requested Price Assessment Reports in the previous contract period.

**EXCEPTION: A retailer may not be denied the offer of a new agreement if its exclusion would result in inadequate participant access.**

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## Change of ownership

If ownership of an authorized vendor changes or the operation ceases during the agreement period, the WIC Vendor Agreement becomes void.

**The new owner must file an application and be approved prior to accepting WIC checks.**

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## Notification

Vendors with a current WIC Vendor Agreement will be sent an application for reauthorization approximately six months prior to the expiration of their current agreement. Notification of acceptance or denial of the new application will be made at least 30 days prior to the expiration date of the current contract.

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